Bray, Robert S.
WHAT ABOUT CASSETTES?

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Editorial note: With the announcement of the new cassette book titles in this issue of *Talking Book Topics*, a new era of recorded reading begins for users of talking books. Henceforth, every new cassette title coming into the national program through the Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped will be announced in *Talking Book Topics*. In addition, a cassette catalog, entitled "Cassette Books", which contains all titles published up to this time, has been produced and is available from regional libraries or from the Division. In response to a number of requests, a series of articles on the cassette program has been prepared by the chief of the Division. Part 1 follows:

What About Cassettes?

Part I

Robert S. Bray, Chief
Division for the Blind
and Physically Handicapped
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20542

I am asked many questions about cassettes by our readers, by other librarians, by members of other professions, and by the public at large. I am very consumer oriented in the formation of my policies and plans and welcome these questions.

The question and answer format is used in this first article in a series to appear in TBT. Send me your questions and I will integrate them with the many I now have on hand for future installments. If you will also share your experiences with cassettes it will assist me in answering the questions posed by others.

What is a cassette book, technically speaking?

"A small cartridge [box would be a more accurate word], 4 inches long, 2-1/2 inches wide and 1/2-inch thick. It contains two small reels or spools, on which a strip of blank or pre-recorded tape .150 inch (approximately 1/7-inch) wide moves back and forth. The tape may be recorded or played in either direction at 1-7/8 inches per second." The above is quoted from *Cassettes and Cassette Duplication* by Peter H. Stanton, President, Infonics, Inc., Santa Monica, California, copyright 1969. A cassette book is many other things, too, in the technical sense. Already our program is pioneering in the 15/16 inches per second speed. The word "box" was added to the above definition because tape cartridges are different from tape cassettes in their physical structure.

What is a cassette book, non-technically speaking?

A cassette book is a book with moving parts. If we think about this for a moment we realize that this fact alone automatically condemns us to some degree of trouble. It also raises another question: What happens to broken cassette books? They are usually repaired by the Telephone Pioneers of Amer-

from Hushby Street Comes Stealing; Comes Creeping," but we cannot forget the delightful times reading that poem and others. This collection is a delight for children and "older" children alike.

LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN
performed by Ruby Dee and George Grizzard. Caedmon TC-1324. 1R. $6.50. Reviewed by Robert Wm. Phinney.

The screamings of the sensitive, alert writers of the past flow wave upon wave to the welcoming guilt-ridden, puritanical conscience of Americans. Piling crime upon crime, injustice upon injustice, inhumanity upon inhumanity, they bombard us with slavery, carpetbagging, sharecropping, poll tax, racial prejudice, and civil rights violation. This is our history; this is our guilt, our sin. This also, is the justification for excerpting 50 pages of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee and Walker Evans.

The subject, the tragedy of the 1930's in the South, has been so pictorialized and fictionized in paintings, films, radio, and novels that it takes only the poetic prose of James Agee, read so sensitively and beautifully by Ruby Dee and George Grizzard, to recall to our minds the pictures we already have stored there, to produce a work of art, divorced from the original book.

THE MOUSE THAT ROARED
by Leonard Wibberley, read by the author. CMS 598. 1R. $5.95. Reviewed by James L. Limbacher.

The outrageous story of the Duchy of Grand Fenwick and its "war" on the United States (which it ends up winning) was not only a hilarious book, but a popular movie as well. Now author Leonard Wibberley tells the listener how the book came about and reads some passages from it. Wry is the word fo Wibberley, and he's a marvelous reader wit a very large tongue in a gigantic cheek whic will endear him to the most jaded listener.

Julie Cummins is with the Rochester Public Library Rochester, New York.

Casper LeRoy Jordan is with the Atlanta Universit School of Library Service, Atlanta, Georgia.

James L. Limbacher is Audio-Visual Librarian, Dearborn Public Library, Dearborn, Michigan.

Robert Wm. Phinney is with the San Bernardino Public Library, San Bernardino, California.

Opal Ziemer is with the Henry Ford Centennial Library, Dearborn, Michigan.

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ADDRESSES OF COMPANIES CITED

Caedmon,
505 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 10018

CMS
14 Warren Street
New York, New York 10007

Columbia Records
45-24 83rd Street
Elmhurst, New York

Paredon
Box 889
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11202

ica, those beautiful people who heretofore have only had to repair talking book machines. But now, for the first time, a book form needs repair in the machine sense. Other cassettes have to be repaired (or replaced) by the manufacturer. These are matters that complicate life for us at DBPH and for your Regional Librarians. We could very easily be "turned off" on the whole business of cassette books! But the overwhelming popularity of the cassette book with its readers has convinced us that we must master its idiocyncracies and establish it in its proper niche in our book delivery system.

To what extent has cassette technology been perfected?

The cassette represents a new technology, as compared to sailboats, but it presents nothing new insofar as the basic principles of magnetism, sound reproduction, mechanical stress and the phenomenon of electrostatics are concerned. What is new is the construction of the cassette and its use as an audio-book in a nationwide system. Going back to my sailboat analogy, I am under the impression that even after thousands of years sailboats are still being perfected. The cassette then can hardly be perfected in the brief ten years since its initial development. Specific aspects of perfection will include the tape in the cassette, the material used in the tape and the latest technique for overcoming tape hiss all of which are too technical for me to write about or for you to understand. Just as we have perfected the phonograph (first invented in the 1870's) to a high degree for this program, so we will modify and improve cassettes to suit the needs of our program. It won't take a hundred years to do it this time! Examples of on-going cassette perfection are the 15/16 i.p.s. speed and the use of four monaural tracks without loss of quality now the object of a research and development investigation. We are even exploring selective transmission of books and magazines by radio or telephone to be recorded on cassettes automatically at the receiving end.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of cassettes as compared to other talking books?

Among the advantages of the cassette are its portability (or more precisely, the portability of the player), and the fact that you can read a cassette without its being plugged into the wall; its ease of handling, especially as compared to other tape forms; and the fact that it does not get scratchy. Disadvantages we could mention are the cassette's susceptibility to break-down as compared to a phonograph record; the higher cost and complication of duplicating large numbers of copies; and the inconvenience to the next reader when the previous reader stops reading in the middle of the book and does not rewind the tape, an inconvenience which is impossible on a disc recording. There are many so-called advantages (or disadvantages) and each has to be evaluated in the light of readers' needs and the total library system. To my way of thinking, a decisive advantage of the cassette book without comparing it to anything else is the capability of producing one copy for one reader of any material that the reader might want. The alleged advantage of erase and reuse of tapes in massive numbers in a national program has yet to be proven to my satisfaction.

Will cassettes eventually be the only kind of talking book issued?

Questions like this are always popular because they put the respondent on the defensive by asking him to foretell the future.

Photo Credit General Electric

When traveling by land, air, or sea, blind and other physically handicapped persons can now take along their favorite "Talking Book" in the form of a handy cassette tape recording. And by using the ear phone provided in each cassette machine, he can become engrossed in his own book world.

CASSETTES—Continued

The inquirer is never satisfied with the simple, honest answer of "I don't know." The answer, on the other hand, could be "yes" by simple decree and action by the administration of the program. This would, however, fly in the face of higher costs, delays in the manufacture of large numbers of copies, expensive packaging, susceptibility to damage, etc. More basically, the answer to the question is "no" merely because it is my policy not to put our limited book resources in competition with each other but to exploit each to the best advantage of the blind and handicapped readers. The cassette is already predominating over open-reel tapes; but the latter will retain importance for some time to come, if for no other reason than the fact that they are the first step in producing disc recordings or cassettes.

To Be Continued

Talking books

The following talking books were recently recorded for the Library of Congress by the American Foundation for the Blind, New York City, and the American Printing House for the Blind, Louisville, Kentucky. **They are now available on loan from your regional library.** For the address of your regional library consult *Talking Books, Adult, 1968-1969,* or write to the Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. 20542.

NONFICTION

BASEBALL IS A FUNNY GAME **TB 3510**

by Joe Garagiola, read by Leon Janney, 5R. AFB (Re-issue)

■ After many years as a catcher in big league baseball, the author became a successful broadcaster. His inside picture of the game, with its amusing anecdotes and lively reproduction of the players' repartee, should delight the fans.

THE BLUE NILE **TB 3520**

by Alan Moorehead, read by Leslie Noel, 8R. AFB (Re-issue)

■ Describing the events on the Blue Nile from 1798 to the mid-19th century, this study complements the author's *White Nile* (TB 3522). The expeditions of James Bruce, Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, Muhammad Ali's campaigns in the Sudan, and Napier's thrust against the Ethiopean Emperor Theodore are vividly recounted by the author.

A BRIDGE FOR PASSING TB 2824
by Pearl Buck, read by Julie Shaw, 6R. APH (Re-issue)

■ This moving story opens with the author's loss of her husband while she was in Japan, at work on the filming of a book. Her grief, the character of her husband, and the inpact of the country fuse into an impressive, threefold narrative that will appeal particularly to those who have suffered such a loss.

THE BRITISH; A PORTRAIT OF A PEOPLE TB 3615
by Anthony Glyn, read by Alan Haines, 10R. AFB

■ A lively and entertaining analysis of British character and culture including family life, education, food, sexual habits, humor and many other subjects. Although the author does make some generalizations about the British life style, most readers will be intrigued by the explanation of the roots of their eccentricities in this study.

CHOU EN-LAI: CHINA'S GRAY EMINENCE TB 2383
by Kai-yu Hsu, read by Richard Braun, 6R. APH

■ A readable account of the history and personality of Chou En-lai as he has developed during the fierce power struggles within China. The author believes that the Premier holds underestimated power in China's Communist Party, and he considers Chou as the strategist who is most likely to salvage Chinese communism.

DEAR MR. BROWN TB 3509
by Harry Emerson Fosdick, read by Neil Fitzgerald, 6R. AFB (Re-issue)

■ These letters to a college student perplexed by religion deal with a wide range of realistic problems that will be helpful to most readers. The clearly stated views of the author are based on his many years in the radio ministry.

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK TB 3015
by David Reuben, read by Larry Robinson, 8R. AFB

■ The problems of sex are dealt with in an exuberant and jaunty style. Although Dr. Reuben's humor is flippant and he uses gags, he provides answers to many questions on the subject that may not have been easily available before.

FATE IS THE HUNTER TB 3564
by Ernest Kellogg Gann, read by Richard Braun, 3R. APH (Re-issue)

■ Autobiography of the popular novelist's exciting flying days when he flew as a commercial pilot and with the Air Transport Command during World War II. A memorable account of the courage and obsession of the men who fly. For readers who won't mind the occasional strong language.

A GIRL AND FIVE BRAVE HORSES TB 3547
by Sonora Carver, read by Julie Shaw, 4R. APH (Re-issue)

■ This daring young woman whose unusual profession consists of diving on horseback from a high tower into a tank is blinded in an unfortunate dive. Mastering her affliction, she continues her dare-devil act with her audience unaware that she cannot see. A lively carnival atmosphere and the steadfast courage of this woman make this a thrilling and memorable autobiography.

land, and a member of the Awards Committee and the Executive Committee of the President's Committee.

This program, now in its 24th year, has two purposes. First, to instill in the minds of young people a favorable attitude toward their handicapped peers and all handicapped citizens. Second, to focus employer and public attention on the capabilities of handicapped workers.

This program is on the Advisory List of National Contests and Activities for 1971-72 of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. ●

CORRECTIONS

The American Foundation for the Blind regrets that it announced the following book in error:

Crime Without Murder, a mystery by Dorothy Davis (TB 3606), listed in the September-October issue of *Talking Book Topics* was not and will not be available.

TB 3606 is the correct number for: *An Unshakable Resolve—the MS Story,* prepared by the staff of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, read by Alan Hewitt and Larry Robinson, 1R., AFB.

A concise, readable account of Multiple Sclerosis and the Multiple Sclerosis Society that was formed to combat it.

In the same issue, (p. 165) the In Brief item "Teaching Taxes," mentions the Internal Revenue Service Publication 728, Understanding Taxes, (Large-Type Version). This publication is out of print. ●

***LOOK* ENDS PUBLICATION**

Look Magazine ceased publication with the October 19, 1971 issue. ●

What About Cassettes?

Part II

Robert S. Bray, Chief
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These are really not articles about cassettes, but the questions asked of me by readers and the answers as I see them in the context of our experience to date with the cassette book.

How long does a cassette book play compared to how long a record plays?

Initially, all DBPH books were placed in C-90 cassettes to be played at 1-7/8 inches per second (ips). The "90" stands for 90 minutes total playing time, or 45 minutes per track or "side." This is equal (theoretically) to the 10-inch, 16 rpm phonograph record that will play up to 45 minutes per side. Notice I said "theoretically" because one of the technical facts of life that complicate things for people who make copies of books, is that all of these neat figures are, in practice, seldom if ever achieved. Thus, a 45-minute side of a cassette (or a record) will, in fact, measure out in some instances to 42 minutes and 15 seconds, etc., etc. Furthermore the amount of tape (length in feet) in cassettes received from suppliers will vary. These are things you seldom notice as a reader but which can raise havoc when it comes to making thousands of copies of cassettes. The phonograph records, on the other hand, are stamped out instantly and completely in one motion like "cook-

Prim: Talking Book Topics, vol. 37, no. 6, November-December 1971, p. 203-205.

ies in the kitchen."

DBPH's more recent cassette books and cassette machines are geared to play at 15/16 inches per second. Playing half as fast doubles the reading time, hence a "C-90" cassette immediately becomes a "C-180" or a 3-hour cassette with no addition of tape. More and more books will be done at this slow speed and the machines in the future will play either speed.

How many times can a cassette be played over and over as compared to a phonograph record?

This is a tough one and can only be answered in approximations that give some idea of the comparative life of the two book forms. A cassette should be able to play 1000 times; a record should last for 200 playings. Differently stated, a talking book record gets scratchy to an intolerable extent after many readings. Cassettes will last much longer and not get scratchy in the sense that records do.

Are cassettes more expensive to produce than records?

Yes. They are two to three times more expensive since all new technical inventions always start out rather expensive. But the price soon comes down with experience, perfection, and volume buying. In addition, the extra expense is worth it because the cassette book has special attractions worth the price. Ten years ago production of phonograph records was three times as much as now.

Will we start producing fewer records now that we are producing cassettes?

No.

Will the cassette machines (player/recorders and playback only) be serviced in the same way as the talking book machine?

Yes. Telephone Pioneers have generously agreed to assume this community service. In the final sense, cassette machines are all talking book machines.

What type of cassette machines will readers receive?

Most readers by far will receive machines that play only. DBPH is developing a cassette book player of its own design based on the experience and evaluation of blind and physically handicapped readers. This machine is a modification of "standard" machines just as the traditional talking book record player is fundamentally a rather simple reliable phonograph of high performance and durability.

Are there priorities in the assignment of cassette machines to readers?

Yes. They are (1) veterans; (2) students; (3) the traveling and professional reader; (4) those living in institutions; (5) others.

The type of machine assigned will vary with availability; e.g., only playback machines will be ordered this fiscal year, no recorders. The above priorities are to be applied against the waiting list by machine agencies and libraries upon the receipt of each shipment of machines. Priorities will be rearranged as more machines become

available and we learn more about the role of the cassette with different categories of readers. Veterans get first choice by law, of course, while other priorities are derived by administrative action after consultation with readers themselves, librarians and members of related professions.

How many cassette players do you expect to distribute within the coming year?

About 14,000.

Will you issue a catalog of cassette books distributed to date?

Yes. They will be issued to readers who possess Library of Congress cassette machines first. If you have a Library of Congress cassette machine and do not receive your catalog by January 1, 1972, contact your regional librarian. Catalogs will then be available to others through regional libraries. Your regional librarian is your authority and personal advisor on all matters pertaining to reading and the use of DBPH materials. This is especially true in the case of new services or materials where judgment, priorities and relationships to older services are concerned.

Gift Ideas for Christmas

Over the centuries many rituals, legends and customs have developed around Christmas. Some are as old as the pagan rituals which celebrated the sun's closer approach to the earth after the shortest and coldest days of the year. Some are as new as the lighting of a giant Christmas tree in the middle of town.

Gift-giving is an important part of the Christmas celebration and probably has its source in the gifts given by the wise men to the infant Jesus. The belief that St. Nicholas (Santa Claus) brings presents stems from the legend of the generosity of St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, who lived in the 4th century A.D. It became the custom to give on both St. Nicholas' Day and Christmas Day, but in general practice the two days gradually fused into one and St. Nicholas became the patron saint of Christmas.

Today, Christmas still means making the inevitable decision about the right gift. A bit of browsing ahead of time reveals that there is a wide variety of gifts available, some of them new this season, which may be particularly useful for visually handicapped people.

READING MATERIALS

Although books and magazines are available on loan through the Regional Libraries for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, many people like to have a personal copy of a particular book, or their own subscription to a magazine. A personal copy of the Bible might be appreciated by some. Several versions of the Bible, including the King James, the Moffat translation, the New English Bible, the Revised Standard Version, and Today's English are available from a number of sources. Bible readers also have a choice of braille, large type, recorded or taped editions. Extensive information about these and many of the reading materials that follow is given in our January-February 1971 insert *Sources of reading materials for the visually and physically handicapped,* available from the Division for the Blind and

Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20542.

In addition to the Bible, there are many other types of religious materials available to visually and physically handicapped persons, including Bible stories, lessons, and instructions; hymns, hymnals, and sacred music; devotional materials and nearly 70 periodicals.

For those interested in other recorded books and the great variety of spoken word recordings that can be purchased through local record stores, mail order houses, and record clubs the Schwann's Supplementary Catalog may be helpful. This catalog contains a complete listing of all spoken word recordings currently available and may be ordered directly by sending 60 cents and your name and address to W. Schwann, Inc., 137 Newbury Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

Several children's books published by the Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress are also for sale from Howe Press, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, Mass. 02172. These unusual books should delight youngsters. All of the books are in inkprint and in braille, allowing a blind child to read along with a sighted person, or the reverse. Howe Press calls these books "Braille-Vision." Some of the titles are: *The Bear Scouts* (BR 1151) by Stan and Jan Berenstain; *Thy Friend, Obadiah* (BR 1433) by Brenton Turkle; *Little Bunny Follows His Nose* (BR 1570) by Katherine Howard; *The Sweet Smells of Christmas* (BR 1571) by Patricia Scarry.

The Bear Scouts was named one of the "50 Books of the Year" by the American Institute of Graphic Arts. *Little Bunny Follows His Nose* and *The Sweet Smells of Christmas* in addition to being Braille-Vision are scented books. Through a process called microencapsulation a fragrance is captured within minute bubbles. The scent is released when pressure is applied and the bubbles are broken. When pressure is first applied only some of the bubbles are broken, leaving more scent for another time.

The Christmas fragrances are pine, candy cane, orange, hot chocolate, gingerbread and apple pie. *In Little Bunny Follows His Nose* four additional scents are presented—rose, peach, strawberry and pickle. It might be a good idea to have some fruit or cookies nearby if you are reading these books with a child. They *can* stimulate the appetite!

The children's braille christmas book, *Expectations* is available free from the Braille Institute of America. Published annually for children in grades 3-6, it is an anthology of writings, stories and poems taken from popular children's books and magazines. There are two pages of embossed pictures in the center-fold depicting some of the characters in the story. This year's edition also includes a micro-fragrance page. To obtain a copy write to: The Editor, Braille Institute of America, 741 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90029.

A subscription to a favorite magazine might be just the gift for a friend or relative. *American Heritage, Atlantic Monthly, Harpers,* and *Sports Illustrated* are among the recorded magazines available for personal subscriptions. *The New York Times* is available in large print, and the Xerox Corporation supplies a large print edition of the *Reader's Digest.* A variety of braille magazines, in-

What About Cassettes?

Part III

Robert S. Bray, Chief
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Have you had much response to the first two parts of this series that appeared in *Talking Book Topics* for September-October 1971 and November-December 1971?

The number of letters has not been too great but the geographical spread has been good, and the letters have been long and obviously very sincerely and thoughtfully written. Sixteen states have been heard from, with several readers responding from some states.

What aspect of the cassette program has been particularly outstanding in these responses?

Apart from the sheer popularity of the program, the aspect of portability has been the one most frequently mentioned. To quote one reader: "The cassette machine is like the pocket book; it can be carried anywhere and, with the use of earplugs can be used anywhere without disturbing others." Another reader stated: "I can see many advantages in cassettes, like taking the book with you on the way to somewhere and getting a little reading done that way. Or perhaps not needing to plug in the machine is one of the major features of this device." Others report reading as they move about the house doing a variety of chores. That sanctum sanctorum of reading rooms, the bathroom, was also mentioned!

Do some readers use their own cassette machines?

Yes.

What will happen when cassette books are produced to play at 15/16 ips?

The same thing that happened when we produced 8 rpm records: the reader will have to obtain one of our machines. By then there will be many more playbacks available. Another alternative would be to have the 15/16 speed added to his machine just as we will convert those few players we have to the two speeds. The slower speed is worth it. By putting three hours of reading time in a cassette we will be able to accomodate many books in three cassettes with little more bulk in one's pocket than a pack of cigarettes. Then there is the potential four-track cassette which would give six hours of play, but that is down the road a little distance and will be covered in Part IV. There are definite reasons for these steps in the technical growing-up process. It took a long time to establish 8 rpm as the ultimate phonograph record for the spoken word. (There are those who are urging 4 rpm!) We are moving much more rapidly to

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Lost? by Theodore Epp, *What Is Faith?* by Theodore Epp, *The Coming War with Russia* by Jack Van Impe, *How to Pray* by Stewart D. Briscoe, *How to Study the Bible* by Stewart D. Briscoe, *How to Be a Member of the Church* by Stewart D. Briscoe. Cassette tapes: *Discipline in the Home* by Dr. Henry Brandt, *Faith Is Believing* by Dr. Richard DeHaan, *Does It Matter What You Believe?* by Ord Morrow.

Television Reading Aids

Closed-circuit TV reading aids available commercially for partially sighted readers are described in fact sheets and brochures from two separate California manufacturers. These television magnification systems allow the partially sighted to read conventional materials through use of equipment made to work with any black-and-white television set, or with specially designed monitors. Each company offers its own program of demonstration, described in the brochures. The address for each company is given below. **Apollo Lasers, Inc.**, 6365 Arizona Circle, Los Angeles, California 90045. **Visualtek**, 1840 Lincoln Blvd., Santa Monica, California 90404.

Available from Xavier Society

Tape Titles

The following tape titles (7-inch open reel and cassette) are now available on free loan from Xavier Society for the Blind: *In Towns and Little Towns* (poetry) by L. Feeney, *Junkie Priest* by John D. Harris, *Lamb* by Francois Mauriac, *Martha, Martha* by Patricia McGerr, *Mint by Night* (poetry) by Alfred Barrett, *No Two Alike* by Maria Del Ray, *In this House of Brede* (cassette only) by Rumer Godden, *Jerusalem Bible*—Old and New Testaments (cassette only).

Large Type Titles

The following large type titles are now available on free loan from Xavier Society for the Blind: *Yankee at Molokai* by Eva Betz, *Wilderness Explorer* by Charles Wilson, *Reproachfully Yours* by Lucile Hasley, *Prayers from the Ark* by Carmen de Gasztold, *Nor Script Nor Shoes* by John McGoey and *Lilies of the Field* by William Barrett.

For a complete listing of available tape titles and available large type titles, write Xavier Society for the Blind, 154 East 23rd Street, New York, New York 10010.

Magazines available in Braille and Tape Formats

The Treehouse and *The Hobby Horse*, two new bimonthly magazines, were announced in the January-February 1972 issue of *Talking Book Topics* and *Braille Book Review*. The magazines were scheduled to appear in January, in braille and open reel tape formats. Because of production problems, the magazines have been late in appearing.

According to producers, first issues of both magazines are now available in braille, open reel, and cassette formats. *The Treehouse* is designed for children ages 3–10 years; *The Hobby Horse* is for adults interested in hobbies such as cooking, knitting, puzzles and scrap craft projects.

Subscription to *The Treehouse* is $6 per year (six issues), in braille and open reel formats, and $8 for cassette. Subscriptions to *The Hobby Horse* are $10 per year (six issues) in braille and open reel tape, and $12 for cassette.

For further information, contact *The Treehouse* or *The Hobby Horse*, 135 North Vernon Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40206. ●

the final standard for cassettes. At this writing it is 15/16, with either two or four tracks.

You look as though something is bothering you in all this mix-up of speeds. What is it?

You are very perceptive. I am impatient with all these fractions. They are difficult to say and, in my opinion, serve to confuse people further. In our discussions in the Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped we have dropped the fractions from 33-1/3, 16-2/3, and 8-1/3 and talk about just plain 33, 16, and 8. The engineers tell us the revolutions per minute are not all that accurate or consistent anyhow. Now we have the cassette modes of 1-7/8 inches per second and 15/16 ips. Think how much easier it would be to just have 2 ips and 1 ips! But so far we have not succumbed to this simplification.

Why did you settle on a C-90 cassette instead of a C-60 or a C-120?

First let me remind our readers that the numbers stand for total minutes of reading time in a cassette: C-60 equals 60 minutes, or 30 minutes to a side or track, etc. The C-90 is the optimum time in terms of time for reading, thickness of the tape, frequency of breakdown when tested in extended use, etc. The tape in a C-120 cassette is necessarily thin in order to fit in the cassette and, therefore, more susceptible to breakage. In coordinating all recordings, especially in considering cross-duplication; e.g., records to cassettes, or open-reel to cassettes, we are thinking in terms of 90 minute units. There will be a time chart in Part IV.

What special uses of cassettes are emerging?

Two special uses come to mind. One reader reports playing his cassettes over the car speaker while traveling so everyone can read with him. This is analogous to the decades of shared reading of families with readers using the talking book machine, a fine practice with domestic advantages as reported to me by the readers themselves as well as other members of the family, or friends. The other special use underlines the great versatility of the cassette recorder. Readers report using patch cords to record noteworthy portions of talking books or other records, portions of radio programs, etc. The same technique enables another reader to make a scrapbook on cassettes on different subjects of interest. Still another special use is as old as tape itself, namely, correspondence by voice. Here the cassette is even better and more standard than open reels.

What is a patch cord?

A patch cord is a special interconnecting cable or wire with plugs on each end to join a cassette recorder to a talking book machine, home phonograph, radio, open reel recorder or other appliance from which sound can be put into a cassette. Patch cords are special little items for the use of the more sophisticated and versatile reader. The Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped does not supply patch cords. They have to be made by and obtained from your friendly neighborhood radio or appliance store. They are not expensive.

I have earphones that fit over both ears for use with my talking book machine. Can I use these same earphones with

my cassette player instead of the single listening plug that goes into my ear?

Yes. You can obtain an adaptor jack very inexpensively from a local store that will plug into your cassette player and into which you can then plug your regular earphones. Readers report that this technique is very good for the hard-of-hearing since the increased volume is substantial as compared to just listening to a speaker.

What magazines can I scan from time to time to keep up on new developments in the cassette industry at large?

I scan several magazines that are available at newstands. *Stereo Review* is one, particularly as cassettes relate to the world of music. The March 1972, *Annual Tape Issue* has a number of articles of interest on cassettes, one of which is entitled "Cassette vs. Disc." The *Stereo Review Tape Recorder Annual* is especially complete. *Billboard* relates to popular music and gives news of the industry. Billboard Publications, Inc. has issued the *New World of Tape*, a 1972 Buyer's Guide, available at some newstands, that has a number of articles. The March 1972 issue of *High Fidelity and Musical America* spotlights tape cassettes and 8-track cartridges. The February 1972 issue of *Popular Science* has an article entitled "Your Buying Guide to the New Pocket Tape Recorders." Many of these miniature recorders use standard size cassettes. They are relatively expensive but are better engineered than the routine recorders. Besides, several readers have said that a cassette recorder is the best single investment they have made! For the more technically minded there are magazines in the audio-engineering and electronics field including one named *db*, the sound engineering magazine.

Titles for an Election Year

An election year often raises special interest in books on political subjects. For some readers, the political conventions, campaigns, primaries and the election itself are intriguing as well as serious processes.
For others, the theories of government and other subjects based on the democratic system are thought-provoking and informative reading. Whatever your political affiliation, the titles listed below may be of interest in this presidential election year.

AN AMERICAN MELODRAMA — **TB 2791**
by Lewis Chester, 24R.

THE ARROGANCE OF POWER — **TB 1500**
by J. William Fulbright, 6R.

THE CAUSE IS MANKIND, and WAR ON POVERTY — **TB 721**
by Hubert H. Humphrey, 3R.

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